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Climate change related statistics

Results of the consultation of the recommendations on climate change related statistics

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

This note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians on the recommendations on climate change related statistics. The secretariat carried out the electronic consultation in February-March 2014.

A total of 41 countries and international organisations replied. All responding countries and organisations supported the endorsement of the recommendations. Respondents also provided views on the priority areas for further work, both nationally and internationally. Several countries and international organisations indicated their willingness to participate in follow-up work.

In view of the support received, the recommendations on climate change related statistics (ECE/CES/2014/5) are submitted to the Conference for endorsement.

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I. Introduction

1. This note summarizes comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the recommendations on climate change related statistics. The Secretariat carried out an electronic consultation of the recommendations in February-March 2014.

2. CES members were asked to structure their comments according to a set of questions on general comments, proposals for further work and national implementation plans.

3. The following 41 countries and international organisations replied: Belarus, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, the Directorate-General for Climate Action of the European Commission (DG CLIMA), Eurasian Economic Commission, European Commission Joint Research Centre (JRC), European Environment Agency (EEA), Eurostat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-STAT), the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).

II. General comments

4. All responding countries and organisations supported the endorsement of the recommendations by CES, and acknowledged the value of the recommendations as the basis for work in countries. Several countries commended the recommendations for being clear, comprehensive, balanced, sufficiently elaborated and well-structured. The following general remarks were made:

(a) National statistical offices (NSOs) should take a leading role in coordinating the production and development of official data to be used for climate change analysis, as climate change has a wide impact on people's lives, wellbeing and societal development. National statistical systems should be reviewed from the climate change viewpoint, and stakeholders should be made more aware of the uses of official statistics for this purpose (France, Italy, Luxemburg, Mexico and Ukraine);

(b) Improving national collaboration with stakeholders, in particular with those involved in producing greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories, is the key recommendation (Belarus, Colombia, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Mexico, the Republic of Moldova, Portugal, Sweden and European Commission JRC);

(c) A close dialogue between the statistical community and international organisations involved in the work on climate change related issues will be necessary for effective future work (Colombia, Finland, Luxembourg, Portugal and FAO);

(d) The recommendations provide a clear direction for development work. Steps for implementing the recommendations need to be considered and prioritised nationally in order to maximise their effect. Some recommendations can be seen as longer term goals; others serve as examples rather than strict recommendations (Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Portugal, Romania and United Kingdom);

(e) The recommendations are based on making better use of existing data and their implementation can be started without notably increasing the workload of statistical offices. The recommendations could help to reduce response burden and avoid duplication of data collection (France, Israel, the Republic of Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia);

(f) The recommendations provide the first response of official statistics to the increased attention to climate change and to the growing need for the related data. The report is a useful tool for collaboration both nationally and internationally (e.g. DG CLIMA).

(g) Wider geo-referencing of data and easier access to more disaggregated data would be highly valuable for adaptation and impact analysis, but also for GHG inventories, especially in the agricultural sector (European Commission JRC). National statistical offices should more widely apply new approaches to ensure respondents' confidentiality and make use of new technology in order to facilitate access to microdata for climate research purposes (Ireland, the Republic of Moldova, Netherlands and Ukraine);

III. Priorities for further international work

A. Priority issues for international work

5. All responding countries and organisations supported the proposals for further work, as presented in Chapter 5.4 of the recommendations. Some countries explicitly supported the establishment of a small Steering Group to lead the way forward (Italy, Switzerland and Turkey). The priorities identified by respondents were grouped into three areas: GHG inventories, climate change related statistics and communication, as follows:

1. Methodological work in support of greenhouse gas inventories

(a) Finding ways to improve consistency of source data for GHG inventories and further aligning the work on inventory producers and statistical offices, for example in GHG inventories, energy statistics, environmental accounts and national accounts (Colombia, France, Mexico, Poland, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom and European Commission JRC);

(b) Participating in the future processes of preparing new guidelines for inventory calculations, for example for the next convention period in 2014-2015, for example with the Task Force I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Reviewing the methodologies of statistical production against the IPCC tier methodologies could help to assess the usefulness and quality of official statistical data for the inventories. (Finland, Mexico, Ukraine and FAO);

(c) Reviewing the usefulness of and methods for compiling approximated greenhouse gas inventory data needs to be explored further in the context of air emission accounts (Eurostat) due to the new Regulation (EU) No 525/2013 that foresees "approximated greenhouse gas inventories" to be submitted at T + 7 months from 2015 onwards.

2. Methodological work on climate change related statistics

(a) Developing a core set of climate change related statistics that would be approved by most countries and would be internationally comparable and compiled on a regular basis. The core set should be developed in a way that leaves room for national flexibility (China, Colombia, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Slovenia, Turkey and Poland);

(b) Reviewing the current statistical classifications and statistical infrastructure from the viewpoint of climate change (Mexico and Italy). Focusing on improving the usefulness of current classifications when they are under revision (Norway and United Kingdom);

(c) Defining the priority areas of new statistics to be derived from existing data or developed from scratch. For example, identify areas where NSOs have competence, such as costs of mitigation and adaption to climate change, use of economic instruments, and in the longer perspective the state of ecosystems, health conditions and social issues related to climate changes. The work should take into account the need to reduce administrative burden, avoid duplication of effort and lower costs of data collection (Finland, France, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden);

(d) Exploring the potential use of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Central Framework (SEEA-CF) for deriving climate change related statistics and indicators. The issue could also be discussed with the United Nations Committee of Experts on Environmental-Economic Accounting (UNCEEA) and the London Group on Environmental Accounting (Israel, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Sweden and European Commission JRC).

3. **Communication aspects**

(a) Maximising the use of existing data by developing common frameworks for organising and disseminating climate change related statistics derived from various different producers (Italy, Poland, Ukraine and United Kingdom);

(b) Promoting communication and cooperation between statisticians and various stakeholders and experts, such as climate policy makers, climate analysts, scientists and researchers to further define priority data gaps and/or clarify the borderline between official statistics and research. (Belarus, China, Colombia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Republic of Moldova, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom, Ukraine and European Commission JRC);

(c) Bringing climate change related statistics to the agenda of other international statistical meetings such as on economic statistics, employment, agriculture, trade etc. in order to present the recommendations and their links to the statistical area in question (Norway).

B. Sharing good practices at international level

6. The respondents called for sharing good practices at international level and drafting international methodological guidelines for harmonising concepts, data collection, processing and dissemination. Setting up special task forces with concrete goals would help to solve specific measurement challenges related to climate change. Support will also be needed for building the necessary statistical capacity in countries (Colombia, Finland, France, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, CIS-STAT and European Commission JRC).

7. All countries strongly supported establishing a regular expert meeting that brings together statistical offices and GHG inventory compilers with other producers and users of climate change related information. The countries and organisations considered it useful for the following tasks:

(a) Move forward to an operational phase in the implementation of the recommendations on climate change related statistics. Share good practices in implementing the recommendations and address issues faced by countries;

(b) Establish a connection between the various national producers, main users and the international expert community, including the scientific communities, for example to discuss how to involve NSOs in supporting the production of wider climate change related statistics;

(c) Facilitate discussions between GHG inventory producers and NSOs, for example to define the supporting role of NSOs towards GHG inventories. Consider how to introduce the new role of NSOs without causing problems into the functioning of the current GHG inventory system;

(d) Bring together international organisations involved in climate change related statistics to establish new partnerships, improve coordination of international work and maintain open communication, involve in particular FAO, IPCC, WMO, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) and UNFCCC.

(e) Reach consensus among different parties, not only statisticians, regarding future development of climate change related statistics with NSOs' support;

(f) Enlarge the discussion to further development of concepts, models, methodologies and measurement frameworks and principles of both GHG inventories and key climate change related statistics;

8. The expert meeting could start by focusing on the cooperation between the statistical community and GHG inventory compilers (Finland). The wider climate change related statistics might need to be discussed in another group as the experts of GHG are different from the experts of other climate change related statistics.

9. The United Kingdom encourages first exploring existing organisations' remits and perhaps extending them in order to find a mechanism for taking forward the recommendations on climate change related statistics.

IV. National implementation plans

A. Countries' plans and priorities

10. All countries and international organisations that replied confirmed that they plan to start implementing the recommendations after endorsement by CES. Some countries noted that lack of resources limits their possibilities to progress in this area. At the same time most countries reported on the progress already achieved. The following areas were highlighted as priorities for national work:

(a) Raising awareness of the importance of climate change related statistics within the national statistical system and with other related institutions, as well as promoting awareness of the CES recommendations among stakeholders (Italy and Mexico);

(b) Facilitating access to existing statistics (e.g. through online tools) and improving their usefulness for climate change analysis and GHG inventories before considering any new additional data needs (Netherlands and United Kingdom). Improving existing data, for example by increasing the geo-referencing of data, reviewing the length of time series, identifying the exact data needed, undertaking special analyses of available data against user needs and increasing the level of data disaggregation for GHG inventories (Colombia, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Lithuania, Netherlands and Turkey);

(c) A key priority will be to establish or continue the work of a national working group with the GHG inventory producers. Closer collaboration is expected to lead to concrete results relatively quickly if it focuses on how to rationalize the work, share

responsibilities, ensure good coordination of work and address challenges in the use of official statistical data. Statistical offices could also assist the national inventory agencies during inventory reviews when questions on data availability and quality are raised (China, Colombia, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Switzerland, Ukraine and FAO);

(d) A number of countries reported that they already fulfil most of the recommendations on provision of data for GHG inventories. Most noted that they plan to put more effort into developing climate change related statistics, such as those on mitigation, adaptation and impacts (Israel, Sweden, Turkey and United Kingdom);

(e) The SEEA-CF is a possible source of new indicators related to climate change. Therefore, development of new statistics should be started by analysing data that can or could be derived from the SEEA-CF. In this context, some countries are working towards producing statistics on environmental taxes and other environmental economic instruments (Israel, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and European Commission JRC);

(f) Reviewing and revising national legislation in some countries to strengthen NSOs' involvement in GHG inventories and climate change related statistics (Colombia, Portugal and Romania);

(g) Establishing direct channels for NSO's international involvement in the GHG inventory system may be useful, for example through national IPCC focal points or contacts with the technical support unit of the IPCC Task Force I. (Finland, Netherlands and Latvia)

(h) Eurostat's plans to implement the recommendations will influence national work. Eurostat will have a clear focus on the issues arising from the European Strategy for Environmental Accounting 2014-2018 and from the Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 on European environmental economic accounts. The implementation phase will focus on improving the quality and timeliness of the air emissions accounts, developing and implementing energy accounts and developing climate mitigation related statistics, for example environmental protection expenditure, environmental taxes and subsidies, environmental employment etc.;

11. Some countries explained that they cannot invest notably in the area at the moment. More human and financial resources would be needed for the statistical offices to take up this challenge. It will take time to build knowledge and competence in climate issues and data linkage, and some organizational changes may be needed to strengthen climate change related statistics and support for the GHG inventory process.

B. Support needed for countries' work

12. The CES members were asked to consider what kind of support from the international statistical community would be helpful in implementing the recommendations. The following suggestions were made:

(a) Organising expert meetings to share experience, discuss common challenges and the way forward in climate change related statistics;

(b) Conducting training seminars to share experience, build capacity in countries with developing statistical systems and engage NSOs in the process of developing GHG inventories for example in non-Annex I parties of the UNFCCC. Researchers and experts of climate change should also be engaged as resource persons in training activities;

(c) Providing bilateral support among countries. Several countries reported about their willingness to share their experience and support other countries in moving forward;

(d) Collaborating at international level (among international organisations) to agree on common standards for data and information systems thus reducing the reporting burden of national authorities;

(e) Establishing global repositories and wiki sites containing relevant methodological and training material;

(f) Translating the recommendations and other relevant methodological materials into Russian to ensure their unambiguous interpretation and wider application;

(g) Identifying sources of funding so that NSOs could engage in this work and so that regional capacity building activities could be carried out;

(h) Providing international guidance to support countries in applying the recommendations at the national level.

V. Concrete comments on issues discussed in the recommendations

13. Some countries and international organisations also provided detailed comments directly on the text of the recommendations. The comments will be reflected in the recommendations as follows:

A. Comments on recommendations related to supporting greenhouse gas inventories (Section 5.1 of the recommendations)

14. DG CLIMA and Eurostat note that the main methodology for the inventories will change as of 2015 so that countries will start applying the 2006 IPCC Guidelines. This will require adapting NSOs' systems to the new guidelines in cooperation with GHG inventory producers. At the same time, the Common Reporting Format (CRF) tables used for the GHG inventories will also change slightly, merging for example the sectors 2 "Industrial Processes" and 3 "Solvents".

- Response: The recommendations mention the ongoing revision of the CRF categories and the expected move to applying the 2006 IPCC Guidelines. The Task Force will review the main challenges to NSOs, and replace all references to CRF tables to refer directly to the new version.

15. FAO would reduce the focus on energy emissions in the recommendation. Although in absolute terms emissions from fossil fuel energy sources dominate total GHG emissions globally and in developed countries, this is not the case in developing countries where a large component of emissions relate to agriculture, forestry and other land uses (AFOLU). Even in developed countries the largest data uncertainties and data gaps reside not in the energy sector, but rather in the other sectors, in particular in the AFOLU sector.

- Response: The specific focus on energy statistics is due to the following: energy is one of the most common sectors for which NSOs provide inventory data, inconsistencies between energy statistics and GHG inventory data have been identified, there is some concern about duplication of effort for these data and, as mentioned by FAO, emissions related to energy dominate total GHG emissions in many countries. In finalising the recommendations, the Task Force took steps to balance the recommendations concerning different sectors of inventory data. The

Task Force will revisit the issue of balance between the different inventory sectors throughout the recommendations.

16. FAO suggested stating more clearly that only Annex I countries have to report annually and are subject to international peer reviews, and that the recently agreed biennial update reporting and the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) processes add incentives to all countries to develop robust inventories.

- Response: The requirement for annual reporting for Annex I countries only is mentioned in Chapter 2, and will be repeated in Section 5.1. Inventory reviews are discussed in Sections 2.3, 2.4 and 5.1. A remark will be added to clarify that only Annex I countries are subject to these reviews. Biennial reporting is mentioned only once, and could be elaborated more. The recommendations do not refer to NAMAs. Instead they mention that national communications require reporting on other information than emissions and that providing those data may be considered as one of the priorities for NSOs. The Task Force will consider whether to include a specific reference to NAMAs and will consider the implication for NSOs.

17. Recommendation 1: Norway suggests reconsidering whether NSOs should bear the full responsibility of identifying and recommending data improvements or recommending how the national statistical system can be better utilized for GHG inventories. Norway notes that in recommendations 2 and 3 the NSO role focuses more on cooperation.

- Response: The intention of the recommendation is to emphasise partnerships and collaboration, and the role of the NSO as the coordinator of the national statistical system to initiate improvements and facilitate the work. The Task Force will review the wording of this recommendation, for example to revise the sentence "NSOs should take the initiative in improving quality of statistical data used for GHG inventories" to "NSOs should initiate collaboration to improve quality of statistical data used for GHG inventories".

18. Recommendation 2: The Netherlands stresses the fact that the European Statistical System Code of Practice explicitly considers both 'burden on respondents' and 'cost-effectiveness', whereas this is not the case in the guidelines for compiling GHG inventories. It should also be stressed that cost-effectiveness not only implies avoiding overlapping data reporting systems nationally, but also to reducing overlapping international data reporting systems.

- Response: The recommendations discuss these differences between the quality guidelines of official statistics and GHG inventories in Section 4.1. The Task Force will add a remark about this difference also to the recommendations in Section 5.1.

19. Recommendation 2: FAO notes that the relevant procedures specifying how to build robust national inventory systems are part of the IPCC guidelines. Thus, it could be mentioned that if NSOs are not part of the GHG inventory process, it is not due to missing processes at the global level or lack of guidelines from UNFCCC/IPCC.

- Response: The Task Force will reflect the issue in the recommendation in Section 5.1.

20. Recommendation 3: Finland finds that working with review teams does not as such enhance collaboration with the UNFCCC and IPCC. Instead, more direct channels of collaboration could be recommended for countries, e.g. contacts with the national IPCC focal points or the technical support unit of the IPCC Task Force on National Greenhouse Gas Inventories (IPCC TFI). Furthermore, the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (CLRTAP) could be a good body for NSOs to engage with. NSOs could also assist the national inventory producers during inventory reviews when questions on data availability and quality are raised.

- Response: NSOs' engagement in the UNFCCC and IPCC processes was discussed at the expert meeting on climate change related statistics for users and producers on 8-9 October 2013. The key findings were reflected in the recommendations, for example in Sections 2.4 and 4.1. The latter section mentions direct contacts with the national representatives. The Task Force is drafting a comprehensive description of the ways for NSOs' engagement in UNFCCC and IPCC processes together with the two organisations. The description would ideally be included as an Annex to the recommendations, or finalised in further work. The Task Force will reflect Finland's suggestions in the recommendations in Section 5.1.

B. Comments on recommendations on climate change related statistics (other than GHG inventories) (Section 5.2 of the recommendations)

21. Recommendation 4: Norway remarked that the report mainly talks about providing microdata for research purposes, but the text in this recommendation also refers to policy makers.

- Response: The recommendations intend to suggest improving access to microdata for researcher purposes. The work of researchers provides important input to policy makers and climate analysts. References to policy makers in this context will be removed from the recommendations.

22. Recommendation 5: Norway points out that evaluating all data of the national statistical system to improve them for climate change analysis may be too resource intensive.

- Response: The recommendations suggest "reviewing statistical programs and data collections from the view point of the data needs of climate change analysis." This could be implemented in different ways by countries, for example at the time of other periodic reviews or development projects of specific statistics. The reviews could also focus on areas of national priority. As climate change is a cross cutting issue, data needs relating to it may be directed at a number of statistical areas. The Task Force will revisit the wording of the recommendation in Section 5.2.

C. Comments on recommendations on statistical infrastructure (Section 5.3 of the recommendations)

23. Recommendation 7: Norway finds the recommendation to revise classifications burdensome, and notes that the classifications used in the System for National Accounts were not developed for the purpose of extracting information at the detailed level suggested.

- Response: The recommendations suggest giving consideration to the data needs related to climate change in future revisions of international statistical standards and classifications. The listed detailed issues for which improved classifications might provide data are examples to illustrate the idea. The Task Force will revisit the wording of the recommendation in Section 5.3.

24. Recommendation 8: Norway suggests asking NSOs instead of reading the guidelines for GHG inventories themselves, to focus on cooperation among the relevant institutions to acquire the required understanding.

- Response: The recommendations suggest familiarizing staff with GHG inventory methodologies to understand the logic behind the methodologies. The recommendation emphasises collaboration and partnerships as Norway suggests.

25. Recommendation 9: Germany underlines that tasks in support of climate change related statistics can be fulfilled within different organizational structures, and notes that it is not necessary that in all NSOs one person has the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality and availability of climate change related statistics. **Norway** suggests that improving cooperation between different units inside the NSO would also be recommended.

- Response: The recommendation states that assigning, as a first step, a person or group with the primary responsibility for climate change related statistics. The Task Force will replace the word "primary responsibility" with "responsibility" to indicate that it does not need to be the primary task. The Task Force will include a remark about the need to improve internal cooperation of the NSO.

D. General comments on the text of the recommendations

26. Eurostat: It could be made clearer that the target audience of the recommendations is not only NSOs but to a certain degree also national inventory producers and other stakeholders, especially international organisations.

- Response: The Task Force will reflect the comment in the recommendations.

27. FAO would like the recommendations to reflect its work on developing a FAOSTAT emissions database and implementing capacity development activities aimed at bridging institutional gaps between NSOs and UNFCCC focal points, as well as technical gaps. FAO has also engaged with relevant agencies in this area (IPCC and UNFCCC, UN ESCAP, UN REDD, UNDP, NSOs in many developing countries, and regional research agencies such as the JRC), and is willing to contribute to NSOs' efforts in this area.

- Response: The Task Force will reflect these comments in the recommendations.

28. Furthermore, a number of countries and organisations provided technical comments and clarifications directly into the report text (Canada, China, Netherlands, EEA, FAO, PRTR and WMO) that will be incorporated in the recommendations.

- Response: The technical comments on the report text will be incorporated during final editing.

VI. Conclusion

29. All responding countries and organisations supported the endorsement of the recommendations on climate change related statistics. Countries have plans for national implementation of the recommendations, and requested for international support.

30. All countries and organisations supported the establishment of a forum in the form of an expert meeting to discuss climate change related statistics. Several countries suggested the creation of a small Steering Group to lead the work.

31. The comments and views expressed during the electronic consultation will provide a good basis for planning future work on climate change related statistics, which will be presented for a review to the CES Bureau in October 2014. The Secretariat will draft a proposal with the Task Force on climate change related statistics.

32. The technical comments on the text of the recommendations and the concrete comments presented above in section V of this paper will be reviewed by the Task Force and incorporated in the final version. The Task Force will also reflect the substantive comments, presented in other parts of this document, in the final version of the report.

33. In view of the wide support expressed by countries and organizations, the Conference is invited to endorse the recommendations on climate change related statistics, subject to reflecting in the recommendations the above comments of the CES consultation and the discussion at the Plenary Session.